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ABSTRACT

This study concerning student teachers' evaluation of their preparation for student teaching follows research on student teachers' perceptions of the most pressing problems encountered during student teaching. The first study identified a list of commonly encountered problems for a variety of teaching situations. In the second study, each of 113 student teachers was asked to rate his level of preparation in meeting these problems as "unsatisfactory," "satisfactory," and "commendable." Analyses of the data indicated no statistically significant trends. Future inquiry will focus on refining the questionnaire with further investigations into significant differences that may become apparent among student teachers in various fields of subject matter preparation. (MM)

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"Student Teachers' Evaluation of Their Preparation for Student Teaching"

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STUDENT TEACHERS' EVALUATION OF THEIR PREPARATION FOR STUDENT TEACHING

INTRODUCTION

A commonly heard criticism by students of course content in education courses is that the material covered is not relevant to the real life problems encountered by teachers. Student teachers often report experiencing problems and frustrations in the classroom for which their academic training may have left them unprepared. To the writer's personal knowledge, there has been no systematic survey of the types of problems encountered by student teachers in their initial classroom situation. Such information could be quite

valuable in evaluating the effectiveness of the academic training of student teachers and could suggest modifications in training programs and course content.

The present study really deals with their perceptions of their training to meet previously identified problems.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AND ANALYSIS

During the period 1972 to 1974, the author had gathered data from 191 student teachers at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale as to the major problems they encountered in student teaching. This pilot project included student teachers in elementary, junior high and secondary school systems in southern Illinois within 100 miles of Carbondale, Illinois. Each student was asked at the conclusion of the student teaching situation, in a free-response interview, to prepare a list of the ten most pressing problems faced during the student teaching experience. The results of this survey, tabulated by sex and level of teaching situation, provided the basis of the present survey since the student teachers identified a list of commonly encountered problems for a variety of teaching situations and for each sex. (A report of the results of this 1974 survey is available upon request from the author.)

The present study was based upon data from a second group of 113 student teachers enrolled in the College of Education at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale and participating in student teaching during the academic years of 1974-1976. Based on the problem list developed in the pilot project for each sex and level of teaching (elementary, junior high and secondary), each of the 113 student teachers was asked to rate his level of preparation in meeting the problems as "Unsatisfactory," "Satisfactory," and "Commendable." The sample of 113 included 26 male and 26 female secondary student teachers, 10 male and 3 female junior high student teachers, and 11 male and 37 female elementary teachers. Of the 113, 95 student teachers were supervised by the same SIU professional staff with 18 from a second student teaching center. It should be noted that inspection of the data revealed no striking differences between these two groups. Consequently, they were combined for analysis.

Data were tabulated for each student teacher's sex and teaching level to describe the number of responses at each level of perceived preparation as Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory and Commendable for each problem in the corresponding list of problems. By scoring each response (Commendable=3; Satisfactory=2; Unsatisfactory=1), it also was possible to compare mean scores for each problem and to rank the problems as to perceived degree of preparation in coping with it.

Since each problem list was specific to a particular sex and level, it was not possible to compare sexes and/or levels

on each problem. When problems were comparable in different lists, mean problem scores and frequency tabulations between sexes and levels were possible. For convenience sake, and due to the small sample in some cases, the "Satisfactory" and "Commendable" categories were collapsed into a single "Favorable" category. For these situations, chi-square analyses comparing sexes and level were compared, and tests or one-way analyses of variance were used to compare mean ratings. Finally, it was possible to compare ranking of preparation reported in this study with ranking of problem frequency reported in the first study.

RESULTS

To shorten the presentation of results, no statistically significant trend was discovered in any of the analyses. Difficulties were encountered in analysis due to the small sample available for some comparisons and due to the fact that the interview method had not yielded comparable data for the subgroups, making some desirable statistical comparisons impossible. Follow-up effort has led to the development of an attitude questionaire which will allow further investigation to proceed with greater facility, and with a minimum of effort.

Summaries of results of the present investigation are presented below.

TABLE I

Correlation between ranking of frequency with which the problems were reported in original study with ranking of reported adequacy of training in coping with the same problems in second study.

Group	N	Number of Problems Ranked	Spearman Rank Correlation
Female Elementary	37	10	-.09
Male Elementary	11	8	-.36
Female Junior High	3	10	-.14
Male Junior High	10	10	-.11
Female Secondary	26	10	-.60
Male Secondary	26	10	-.12

Consistently, there is a slight tendency for students in this study to rank their training more adequate for problems more frequently encountered in the first study as indicated by the negative correlations. The low correlations do not reflect, however, a strong relationship.

TABLE II

Comparison of mean adequacy of preparation ratings for males and females at each level of teaching experience

Problem Type	Level	Mean Female	Mean Male	N Female	N Male	t-test* Female & Male
Discourtesy/discipline	Elementary	1.41	1.27	37	11	.79
Varying student abilities		1.89	2.09	37	11	-.83
Motivation/attention		1.81	1.45	37	11	2.00
Materials/resources		2.08	2.18	37	11	-.42
Organization/time/ energy		1.65	1.64	37	11	.06
Discourtesy/discipline	Junior High	1.00	1.10	3	10	-.53
Apathy/Motivation		1.33	1.40	3	10	-.15
Poor, inadequate facilities		1.67	2.00	3	9	-.97
Ability to organize		2.67	2.10	3	10	2.28
Lack of supervision		1.67	1.80	3	10	-.45
Student ability differences		2.00	1.80	3	10	.53
Discourtesy/discipline	Secondary	1.35	1.38	26	26	-.28
Apathy/Motivation		1.50	1.54	26	26	-.25
Establishing relationships with students		1.85	1.69	26	26	.79
Poor, inadequate facilities		1.81	1.62	26	26	1.00
Unethical faculty behavior		1.52	1.42	25	26	.56
Adjusting to high school level		1.96	1.81	26	26	.78

*None was significant at the .05 level

By collapsing the ratings (Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Commendable) into a dichotomy (Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory) it was possible to compare males with females on the problems indicated in Table II by means of a 2 x 2 chi-square analysis. In all cases, the same pattern of non-significance was found.

Since only two problem types were common to all 3 levels of student teaching, it was not possible to analyze trends across levels for all types of problems. For the two problem types common to all levels, Discourtesy-discipline and Student Motivation, 2 x 3 chi-square analyses and a one-way analyses of variance yielded uniformly, nonsignificant results.

DISCUSSION

The uniformly non-significant results were somewhat disappointing. However, it is felt that the inadequacy of the data derived from both the small samples and the non-uniformity of data due to the interview technique may have masked real differences. A number of lessons have been learned from the effort which will influence future research and which have lead to the development of more adequate means of conducting such research in the future.

First, the substance of problems appearing in the various listings of problems reported may be classified into four general areas as follows:

1. Problems relating to the personal adjustment and skills of the student teacher himself.

2. Problems relating to the characteristics and behavior of students.
3. Problems relating to coping with work activities and the administrative environment within which the student teaching occurs.
4. Problems relating to the physical resources related to student teaching.

Future research may allow a refinement of these dimensions of problems. These four categories, however, have been utilized in the development of an objective questionnaire to be used in future research. At present, analysis of this questionnaire is incomplete, but preliminary results are encouraging.

For each of the 4 problem areas described above, a number of itmes were prepared which seemed to identify specific problems in the problem area. A total of 50 such items were developed for pilot investigation. Each item described a problem in such a fashion that it could be rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale both as to 1) Frequency or severity of its occurrence in the student teaching situation and 2) Adequacy of academic training in coping with the problem. In a few minutes, each student teacher is able to reread both the severity of problems in 4 problem areas and to rate his preparation for coping with problems in the same 4 areas. In addition, total "problem severity" scores and total "adequacy of preparation" scores may be obtained.

The questionnaire resulting has been partially tested on a sample of 19 student teachers with encouraging results from the standpoint of its reliability.

Reported below are means, standard deviations, and internal-consistency reliability estimates for the sample of 19 students.

TABLE LLL

Means, standard deviations, reliability estimate for the STPPE questionnaire

Problem Area	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability Estimate
Difficulty Rating				
#7 Physical Resources	8	16.26	5.80	.78
#3 Student Characteristics	11	27.53	9.64	.89
#5 Work/Administration	22	39.74	11.07	.81
#1 Personal Adjustment/Skills	9	16.79	5.34	.64
#9 Total for Difficulty	50	100.32	25.82	.92
Preparation Rating				
#8 Physical Resources	8	27.53	6.52	.82
#4 Student Characteristics	11	34.84	8.93	.89
#6 Work/Administration	22	74.21	17.18	.92
#2 Personal Adjustment/Skills	9	28.26	8.34	.83
#10 Total for preparation	50	164.84	36.46	.96

It is of interest to note that preliminary results support the negative relationships found between the rankings of problem frequency and adequacy of training reported in Table I. These new results are found below.

TABLE IV

Correlation between ratings of problem severity and adequacy of preparation (N=19)

Problem Area	Correlation
Personal Adjustment/Skills	-.58
Work/Administration	-.54
Student Characteristics	-.82
Physical Resources	-.96
Total	-.65

Concluding Remarks

Future inquiry will focus on refining the questionnaire with further investigation into significant differences that may become apparent among student teachers in various fields of preparation such as mathematics, social studies, science, etc. It will be of value to discover if students in one discipline consistently rate themselves better prepared or experience more problems than student teachers in other areas. There also will be an evaluation done with the same questionnaire with student teachers at one of the other state schools to compare results of training between that school and SIU-C.

Biographical Notes

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